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Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 IOE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-07
MCT-01 DHA-02 /083 W
----------311426Z 123118 /50
O R 311230Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9333
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0233

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS UNSC DM
SUBJ: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT: COMPLAINT AT UN

REF: A USUN 213 B USUN 214 C COTONOU 143(NOTAL)
D. COTONOU 168 (NOTAL)

1. BENIN'S ANXIOUSNESS TO HAVE MISSIONS FROM UNSC, OAU AND NON-ALIGNED COME TO VERIFY CHARGES OF AGRESSION (REFS A AND B) ARE PROBABLY RESULT OF OFFICIAL AFRICAN SKEPTICISM ABOUT ORIGIN AND INTENTIONS OF INVADING FORCE WHICH ARRIVED HERE JAN 16 (REF D). ON BASIS RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBASSIES, WE AND FRENCH APPEAR TO BE ONLY NON-COMMUNIST DIPLO-MATIC MISSIONS IN COTONOU WHO ARE NOT CONVINCED ENTIRE INVASION WAS AN ATTEMPT ON PRESIDENT KEREKOU'S PART TO CONSOLIDATE POWER AND TAKE PEOPLE'S MINDS OFF DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING, FOR FIRST TIME IN THIS COUNTRYS' HISTORY, FOOD SHORTAGES. CANADIAN THIRD SECRETARY, RESIDENT ACCRA, WHO JUST LEFT AFTER THREE-DAY VISIT TOLD US

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HE WILL REPORT THE INVASION AS PHONY. GHANIAN AND EGYPTIAN AMBASSADORS SAID THE SAME, AND ZAIRIAN AND GERMAN AMBS IMPLIED AS MUCH.

2. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE NO DOUBT WHITE SOLDIERS WALKED TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE FROM AIRPORT TWO MILES AWAY, SHOT AT IT A FEW TIMES, THEN WALKED BACK. AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO EYE-WITNESS REPORTS THAT INVADING FORCES EVER MADE CONTACT WITH GPRB MILITARY, AND IN SPITE OF TREMENDOUSLY LONG LIST OF COINCI-DENCES COMPILED REF D, WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO BELIEVE KEREKOU ENGINEERED THE ENTIRE SHOW. WE COULD EASILY BE CONVINCED THAT HE KNEW IT WAS COMING, AND TOOK EVERY POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE OF IT AFTER NEUTRALIZING POTENTIAL OR REAL FIFTH COLUMN ASSISTANCE.

3. IN EITHER CASE, BENIN IS PREPARED TO OFFER CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF A FOREIGN INVASION AT THIS TIME. THEY HAVE A TON OR MORE OF CAPTURED AMERICAN, FRENCH, BRITISH, BELGIAN AND MOROCCAN WEAPONS AND MUNITIONS(REF C), ONE CAPTURED MERCENARY OF GUINEAN NATIONALITY, AND ONE APPARENTLY CAUCASIAN CADAVER. THEY CAN POINT TO HOLES IN THE PRESIDENCY AND SEVERAL OTHER BUILDINGS, AND THEY SHOULD HAVE PLENTY OF EYEWITNESSES ACCOUNTS OF THE AIRPLANE LANDING AND TAKING OFF, AS WELL AS OF "MERCENARIES" MARCHING ON THE TOWN. WE BELIEVE TOO THAT THEY CAN FIND WITNESSES TO TESTIFY THAT THE INVADERS WERE SPEAKING FRENCH.

4. AS FOR THE REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING SUCH FINDINGS BY SUPPOSEDLY UNBIASED INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS, WE SEE TWO: FIRST TO GIVE GPRB THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE ITS REVOLUTIONARY CREDEN-
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TIALS BY FLAILING AWAY AT FRENCH(AND PERHAPS AMERICANS) IN SUCH A FORUM AND MANNER THAT ANY RESPONSE WOULD ONLY BE SEEN BY THIRD WORLD AS PROOF OF COMPLICITY. THIS WOULD ALSO GIVE KEREKOU HIS CHANCE TO EMULATE THE ANGOLA MERCENARY TRIALS, PUTTING THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF MERCENARY ACTIVITY ON TRIAL AT THE SAME TIME HE TRIES WHOLE COUNTRIES INSTEAD OF JUST THEIR NATIOANLS. SECOND REASON IS TO OFFER FORUM FOR DERISION OF FRENCH CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE, A THEME WHICH FIRST SURFACED WHEN KEREKOU CHANGED THE COUNTRY'S NAME FROM DAHOMEY IN NOVEMBER 1975. THIS IS APPARENTLY A PERSONAL CRUSADE THAT HE RETURNS TO REGULARLY, MOST RECENTLY DURING THE VISIT OF THE RESIDENT DIPLOMATS TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TO SEE THE DAMAGE CAUSED THERE (REF C). SUCH A CRUSADE MIGHT BE SEEN AS AN EFFORT TO BUILD A NATIONAL IDENTITY TO SUPERSEDE THE ONLY UNIFYING FEATURE THIS COUNTRY HAS HAD TO DATE: ITS INCLUSION IN THE FRENCH COLONIAL WEST AFRICAN UNION.

5. THERE COULD BE SOME DIFFICULTIES WITH ANY INTERNATIONAL

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FACT-FINDING MISSION, HOWEVER. IT APPEARS FAIRLY DEFINITE
HERE, FOR EXPAMPLE, THAT THE PLANE WAS AN ILYUSIAN-18 WHICH
DID NOT LAND IN ANY NEIGHBORING CAPITALS THAT KEREKOU WOULD
LIKE TO IMPLICATE (IE TOGO, IVORY COAST, SENEGAL OR
MOROCCO), AND THE CAPTURED WEAPONS LOOK TO BE A MIXED BAG
THAT COULD BE COLLECTED EASILY ENOUGH WITHOUT THE COMPLICITY
OF A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT: COMPLICITY WHICH KEREKOU WOULD
DEARLY LOVE TO PROVE SO HE CAN DENY THE EXISTENCE OF AN
ORGANIZED RESISTENCE MOVEMENT LARGE ENOUGH TO MOUNT SUCH
AN OPERATION. FINALLY, THE BIGGEST PROGLEM HE WILL PROBABLY
FACE IS GETTING NEIGHBORING SKEPTICAL GOVERNMENTS TO LEND
ENOUGH CREDENCE TO THE IMPERIALIST INVASION THEORY TO BACK
HIS DEMANDS FOR VISITS BY INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATORY MISSIONS.

6. AS FOR HOW HARD KEREKOU MIGHT PUSH, AND HOW MANY TOES
HE MIGHT STEP ON TO GET SUCH MISSIONS, IT IS INSTRUCTIVE
TO NOTE THAT GUINEA IS HELD UP HERE AS THE BRIGHTEST
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EXAMPLE OF HOW TO RUN A REVOLUTION. ADDED TO THIS IS THE
FACT THAT GRUMBLING AROUND TOWN HAS RECENTLY GROWN LOUD
ENOUGH THAT KEREKOU AND HIS GOVERNMENT MUST SURELY KNOW THAT
EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS WORKING HERE IN ALL MANNER OF
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE VERY CLOSE TO THROWING THEIR
HANDS UP IN DESPAIR AND LEAVING. HE MIGHT JUST HAVE
DECIDED NOW IS THE TIME TO GO FOR BROKE, AND IGNORE
THE CONSEQUENCES.

7. FOR THE USG, ANY FURTHER INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY GIVEN
THE INVASION OF COTONOU IS LIKELY TO BE CONTENTIOUS AT THE
VERY LEAST, AND MIGHT EVEN APPEAR TO IMPLICATE US THROUGH
THE USE OF VERY BROAD LABELS (CAPITALO-IMPERIALIST) THAT
VAGUELY REFER TO JUST ABOUT ANY COUNTRY OUTSIDE THE
SECOND OF THIRD WORLDS. MEANWHILE, WE BELIEVE THAT SOME
GENTLE ENCOURAGEMENT OF FRIENDLY AFRICAN UN MISSIONS,
PERHAPS INCLUDING GHANA, NIGERIA, NIGER AND AGYPT, AND
PERHAPS WITH SOME OF THE OBSERVATIONS INCLUDED REF D,
MIGHT PREDISPOSE THEM TO URGING BENIN NOT TO BE SO
OBDURATE. THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977COTONO00233
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770033-1117
Format: TEL
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977014/aaaaactk.tel
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 COTONOU 168
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3565507
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT: COMPLAINT AT UN
TAGS: PINS, DM, UN
To: USUN NEW YORK STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/28ffa2d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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US Department of State
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009